

Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace Relations

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2012–2013**

Outcome 4 - Workplace Relations and Economic Strategy

DEEWR Question No. EW0794_13

Senator Abetz provided in writing.

Question

Asian Century white paper

Why was industrial relations taken out of the Asian Century white paper?

Answer

The White Paper on *Australia in the Asian Century* does recognise the role of workplace relations in achieving the objectives of the White Paper. It does so by acknowledging that governments can help people make the most of the Asian Century by promoting fair and responsive workplaces.

Further, the White Paper specifically refers to the workplace relations system as one of its pathways to support objective 1. Objective 1 states that '*All Australians will have the opportunity to acquire the skills and education they need to participate fully in a strong economy and a fairer society*'. In achieving this objective, one of the relevant pathways is to 'continue to develop, through the *Fair Work Act 2009*, and ongoing partnership, a workforce culture in which employees, employers and unions collaborate for continuous improvement and productivity growth'.

The White Paper also highlights that Australia's engagement with multilateral bodies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) provides opportunities to strengthen ties with our region and address shared policy challenges. Australia signed a five-year partnership agreement with the ILO in 2010 to provide funding to support ILO technical assistance programs that promote sustainable development and fair work, such as improving conditions for factory workers in the garment industry in several southeast Asian countries.